



State of Wisconsin
Jim Doyle, Governor

Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection
Rod Nilsestuen, Secretary

September 2, 2010

TO: Members of the Purchase of Agricultural Conservation Easement (PACE) Council
FR: Vicki Elkin, Policy Initiatives Advisor, Office of the Secretary
RE: September 15th PACE Council Meeting and PACE Farm Tour in Cambridge, Wisconsin

(This message is also attached below as a PDF)

I am forwarding the proposed agenda and supporting materials for our upcoming PACE Council meeting. **Our meeting will be held from 9:30 am to 3:00 pm on Wednesday, September 15th, at the Keystone Grill in Cambridge, Wisconsin.** Directions are attached. As always, please let me know if you plan to attend the meeting.

A couple of notes as you read the agenda and prepare for the meeting:

PACE Farm Tour

After our business meeting, we will tour our top-ranked PACE project: a 220-acre dairy farm in the Town of Oakland. The landowner and representatives from the Natural Heritage Land Trust and Jefferson County will be on hand to discuss the project.

Working Lands Program Updates

Agricultural Enterprise Areas: DATCP held public hearings on the proposed Agricultural Enterprise Areas on August 12th and August 16th at the Town of Washington near Eau Claire and in Madison. We received only positive comments on the AEA proposals and the 12 recommended AEAs will now move forward to final rule designation, which is anticipated to be complete by the end of the year.

PACE Projects: DATCP has been working with selected PACE applicants to move forward in the easement funding process. At the last meeting we discussed the fact that two of our top projects might also qualify for state Stewardship funding through the DNR. These two projects did in fact make the cut for Stewardship funding. However, because of new easement requirements imposed on landowners by the DNR, the cooperating entities would rather pursue PACE funding for these projects. As a result, there will be no additional projects for the Council to recommend at our meeting, as we are still committed to working with the initial selected 16 projects.

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On a related note, we have scheduled a meeting with DNR leadership to discuss the issue of how the department treats agricultural conservation easements. The DNR is looking to create additional “Farming Heritage Areas,” like the North Branch Milwaukee River Wildlife and Farming Heritage Area we heard about at one of our earlier meetings, and we would like to ensure that our programs complement each other and are workable for active farmers.

Review and Discuss PACE Eligibility Criteria and Ranking Criteria

We will devote the majority of our meeting to a discussion regarding the PACE eligibility requirements and ranking criteria for 2011. The staff will present a number of possible changes to the 2010 materials based on the comments at our last PACE Council meeting along with suggestions and feedback from applicants, the scoring team, and others. We believe that we will be able to tweak the ranking criteria to address the following issues, among others:

- Regional variation in farms and farming across the state
- Development pressure: a concern has been raised that our system did not adequately capture different levels of development pressure
- Whole farm versus partial farm applications: how to we treat them equally
- Balance and distribution of points across the various sections of the ranking criteria
- Community Support

Our presentation will include specific examples of how the revised criteria would work with different parcels.

Thanks to all for your hard work and participation. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have questions about the materials or need additional information.